

Message Text

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70

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00

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O R 241924Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4731

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USMISSION NATO

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 6314

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJECT: COUP RUMORS INCREASE

REF: LISBON 6297 DTG 241521Z OCT 75

1. THE COUP-COUP CLOCK IS TICKING AGAIN IN PORTUGAL -- VERY LOUDLY. FOR THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS POLITICAL CIRCLES AND THE PUBLIC AT LARGE HAVE BEEN TALKING COUP. THERE IS VERY LITTLE HARD EVIDENCE, ALMOST NONE IN FACT, BUT THE AIR IS FULL OF RUMORS.

2. AS REPORTED REFTTEL, THERE WAS A SERIES OF UNEXPLAINED BOMBINGS OCT 23. THESE BOMBINGS, PLUS THE COUP TALK, LED
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THE GOP TO DECLARE A "SIMPLE ALERT" MORNING OCT 24. DURING

AFTERNOON OCT 24 EMBASSY OFFICERS ENCOUNTERED MILITARY CHECK POINTS ON ACCESS ROADS TO LISBON. NO CIVILIAN MILITIA NOTED.

3. THERE ARE ALMOST AS MANY COUP THEORIES AS THERE ARE POLITICAL OBSERVERS. BASICALLY, HOWEVER, THE SCENARIOS ARE THESE:

(A) LEFT-WING COUP: ACCORDING TO THE CONSERVATIVE RIGHT, THE COMMUNISTS AND ULTRA-LEFT ARE PREPARING A COUP TO OVERTHROW THE MODERATE AZEVEDO GOVERNMENT. PROPONENTS OF THIS THEORY NOTE THAT THE COMMUNISTS AND THEIR ALLIES HAVE BEEN ACTIVE IN THE STREETS OF LATE; THAT THE ULTRA-LEFT HAS OSTENTATIOUSLY REFUSED TO TURN IN ITS ARMS AS THE GOP ORDERED; THAT THE LEFT HAS RETAKEN RADIO RENESCENCA; AND THAT THE LEFT IS CLAIMING A RIGHT-WING COUP IS IN THE OFFING. ALL OF THE ABOVE HAS LED CONSERVATIVE OBSERVERS TO THE CONCLUSION THAT A COMMUNIST-ULTRA-LEFT COUP IS IN THE IMMEDIATE OFFING. CONSERVATIVE OBSERVERS ALSO POINT TOWARDS NOVEMBER 11 (ANGOLA INDEPENDENCE DAY) AS A COUP DEADLINE -- NOTING THAT A PRO-COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT IN PORTUGAL WOULD HAND OVER POWER TO THE PRO-COMMUNIST MPLA.

(B) RIGHT-WING COUP: LEFT-WINGERS SEE THE ULTRA-RIGHT PREPARING A COUP. THEY SEE, OR CLAIM TO SEE, INCREASED ELP AND SPINOLISTA ACTIVITY IN PORTUGAL (I.E. YESTERDAY'S BOMBINGS); PREDICTIONS ARE MADE OF BORDER INFILTRATIONS; THERE IS TALK OF A JAIL BREAK FROM THE ALCOENTRE PRISON WHERE FORMER SECRET POLICE ARE STILL DETAINED; THREATS AGAINST THE LIVES OF LEFTISTS IN GOP ARE CITED; WESTERN EUROPEAN, FELLOW-TRAVELING PRESS ARTICLES (I.E. CHRETIEN TEMONAGE) ARE SURFACING IN LISBON. ANGOLAN INDEPENDENCE ON NOVEMBER 11 IS ALSO CITED HERE. LEFTIST THEORIES HOLD THAT A RIGHT-WING MOVEMENT, ALLIED TO THE FNLA, IS PREPARING TO GRAB LUANDA BETWEEN NOW AND NOVEMBER 11. ACCORDING TO THIS THEORY, AFTER THAT HAPPENS, PORTUGAL WILL BE INVADDED BY ELP AND MDLP FORCES FROM SPAIN.

4. THESE ARE THE MAIN THEMES. VERY LITTLE CAN BE SAID WITH CERTAINTY, EXCEPT THAT THESE THEORIES, AND VARIATIONS ON THEM, ARE COMMON CURRENCY IN LISBON. EVIDENTLY, THE GOP KNOWS -- OR BELIEVES IT KNOWS -- SOMETHING.
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5. ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE IN PORTUGAL'S SUPERCHARGED ATMOSPHERE. BUT EMBASSY DOUBTS THAT A SERIOUS COUP ATTEMPT IS IN THE IMMEDIATE OFFING. AN ADVENTURISTIC MOVE IS, HOWEVER, A POSSIBILITY. IF ONE SHOULD EVENTUATE IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE, WE BELIEVE IT IS MORE LIKELY TO COME FROM THE RIGHT THAN THE LEFT. IF THE LEFT MOVES IT WILL PROBABLY ONLY BE AFTER THEY HAVE FIRST UNCOVERED OR FABRICATED A RIGHTIST

PLOT AS COVER.
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